

In the final Office Action dated February 6, 2003, claims 1-3 and 18-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,519,465 to Triplett ("Triplett"). Claims 1-5, 9-14, 18-22 and 26-29 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable U.S. Patent No. 6,158,535 to Porubcansky et al. ("Porubcansky") in view of Triplett. The rejections are respectfully traversed. The claims have never the less been amended to further clarify the invention and to eliminate any ambiguities that may have been the basis for the rejections.

The present invention is directed to crawler vehicles, such as crawler cranes, that have a plurality of crawler assemblies that are identical and/or interchangeable. In particular, independent claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 2-5 and 9) are each directed to crawler vehicle comprising a car body and a plurality of identical crawler assemblies, wherein each of said crawler assembly comprising a crawler track powered by a drive assembly and supported on a crawler frame. Independent claim 10 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 11-13) are each directed to a crawler crane having an upper works rotatably mounted on a lower works, wherein the lower works comprises a car body and a pair of interchangeable crawler assemblies. Independent claim 18 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 19-22 and 26) are each directed to a crawler vehicle comprising first and second crawler assemblies removably mounted to the first and second sides, respectively, of the car body, wherein each of the crawler assemblies are configured to also be mountable on the other (or either) side of the car body. Independent claim 27 and the claims dependent thereon (i.e., claims 28-29) are each directed to a crawler crane having a lower works comprising two independently powered crawler assemblies mounted on a car body, wherein each of the crawler assemblies are of identical design.

In addition to the above, each of the independent claims require that the drive assembly for each crawler assembly be connected to the crawler frame at a location spaced away from the center of said crawler assembly (or near an end of the crawler assembly). Moreover, each crawler assembly has an asymmetric construction.

As previously explained, the above-described features have several advantages over the prior art. For example, and as set forth in detail in the originally filed specification, the use of identical and/or interchangeable crawler assemblies permits

either crawler assembly to be connected to either side of the vehicle or crane. This eliminates the need to design and manufacture separate right-handed and left-handed crawler assemblies, thereby simplifying and reducing the cost of manufacture. This also eliminates the number of replacement parts that need to be maintained in stock. In other words, the vehicle operator/owner would only need to keep one crawler assembly on hand for possible repairs, as opposed to needing to keep on hand both a right-handed and a left-handed crawler assembly.

None of the above-described features or limitations are disclosed or suggested by the prior art references. For example, Triplett is directed to a crawler vehicle having a pair of crawler assemblies, wherein each crawler is powered by two separate drive motors. The reliance on Triplett appears to be based on the assertion that Triplett discloses a pair of identical crawler assemblies (35). Applicant respectfully disagrees. Although Triplett does state that several of the drive assembly components, such as the hydraulic pumps (17), the hydraulic motors (18), the sprockets (25) and the motor covers (22) are interchangeable, there is no suggestion that the crawler assemblies (35) are interchangeable. In other words, the assertion that the crawler assemblies (35) are interchangeable or movable from one side to the other is only speculation and/or the result of hind-sight construction of the Triplett disclosure. In addition, it should also be observed that Triplett does not appear to employ asymmetric crawler assemblies.

As previously explained, Porubcansky clearly discloses a crawler crane having crawler assemblies that are neither identical nor interchangeable. This fact has been conceded by the Examiner (February 6, 2003 final Office Action, p. 2).

Consequently, none of the prior art references, either alone or if combined, disclosed the features and limitations of the present invention. Accordingly, Applicant believes that the pending claims are truly distinguishable over the prior art, and it is believed that the application is now in condition for allowance. If for any reason the